

EXHIBIT 15
DATE 3/17/09
SB 344

March 17th, 2009

Dear Members of the Montana House Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Committee:

I am in opposition to Senate Bill 344 for the following reasons:

1. I believe the existing laws already take care of all the concerns of this bill. If a rancher or farmer wishes to shoot and kill any predator bothering livestock, he may do so already. This bill won't change or enhance anyone's ability or permission to kill such predators.

2. Creating a bill that bans an individual predator because of a very limited "kill ratio" from among all the known predators seems out of proportion. Statistics show other dogs (and dogs in dog packs) also kill livestock besides wolf-dogs. Eagles kill livestock. Weather is a huge "predator". Banning the ownership of "wolf-dogs" will not affect livestock predation statistics.

3. If "wolf-dogs" are banned, they then have to be properly identified as wolf-dogs to be eliminated. My research has shown there is no easy method of identifying such animals for sure. I don't believe Montana will ever have the funds or manpower to go the genetic-testing route which is still being developed.

4. Have members of this committee investigated how other states have tried to deal with the "wolf-dog" issue? From what I have learned, Alaska and Wyoming have to take a "blind eye" approach to their existing laws - there is no way to enforce them. Why create another law on our books that can't be enforced?

5. For all responsible owners of "wolf-dogs", who do not wish to put their pets at risk, they will have to either deny their pets are really "wolf-dogs" to escape the Gestapo, or they will have to leave Montana and go live elsewhere. That would create an environment I don't want to see happen in Montana.

6. For all responsible owners of "northern-breed dogs" who look like wolves, and the average Malamute-Husky cross does have all the basic characteristics of wolves for identification purposes, they would have to live in fear of having their pets mistaken for "wolf-dogs" and taken away and destroyed. I happen to have 2 such dogs. I don't want to be mixed-up in this wolf-dog hunt just because my Husky-looking dogs happen to look like wolves to the average person who doesn't really know what a real wolf looks like. How often do people stop me on trails when I take my dogs for a walk - saying "they look like wolves - are they part-wolf"? If this bill passes, will I be walking my dogs in constant fear of being "reported" to the authorities for owning a wolf hybrid, whether I say they aren't or not. And from what I've learned, there are a lot of Husky sled-dog types around who probably have a low percentage of wolf in them somewhere along the line and could very possibly have a few genetic wolf markings. So why have northern-breed dogs as pets which I have always had for the last 40 years? They are intelligent. They are wonderful companions. They are great company on my treks into the mountains which I do most everyday of the year. If I'm irresponsible enough to let them roam and harass livestock, then they can be shot. But don't make my ownership of them against the law.

Respectfully submitted,
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